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SUBJECT: Goma Report: October 17-20

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Six CNDP soliders were reportedly killed during a firefight between CNDP and FARDC in Katali October 17. The Front for Patriotic Resistance in Ituri (FPRI-Force Patriotique de Resistance in Ituri) is expanding its operations. Although they number only approximately 250 combatants, the Ituri rebels operate in a broad area due to an extensive local contact network. The CNDP has rejected MONUC's proposal to commence high level mil-to-mil discussions to define zones of separation. The FARDC has announced it intention to recommence operations against the FDLR. Radio Okapi reported that LRA rebels attacked and pillaged several villages north of Dungu on October 19, resulting in at least 2,100 IDP's. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) At the October 20 MONUC military briefing, MONUC military observers reported that during an October 17 firefight between the FARDC and CNDP in Katali (Masisi), 6 CNDP combatants were killed and one officer was captured. A "nervous sentry" reportedly sparked the fighting.

¶3. (SBU) In South Kivu, there was fighting in Kalehe on October 19. On October 17, the CNDP broke the ceasefire in South Kivu, moving into an area 7 kilometers from Numbi before FARDC pushed CNDP troops back. (Note: According to MONUC, this raised the total number of ceasefire violations since January 23, 2008 to 293. End Note.)

¶4. (SBU) The Front for Patriotic Resistance in Ituri (FPRI-Force Patriotique de Resistance in Ituri) is expanding in both Irumu and Djugu territories. FPRI are also present and active on the Bunia-Gety-Boga axis and in the Grand Nord border area of Lake Albert. There are approximately 250 FPRI combatants, but with an extensive contact network that allows them to operate effectively across a wide area. MONUC reported that they have light machine guns, RPG 7's, and mortars. Better trained than the FARDC, the FPRI forces usually prevail in combat against the FARDC. The FPRI will not directly confront MONUC, except to test it.

¶5. (SBU) MONUC had hoped to arrange high level mil-to-mil talks with the CNDP this week to decide on zones of separation. MONUC-FARDC talks would have followed, then three-way talks. The CNDP has, however, rejected these talks.

¶6. (SBU) The FARDC announced that it would resume operations against the FDLR. MONUC noted that this would be difficult in the near-term, as 8 of 10 FARDC battalions in the region are aligned against the CNDP. However, as soon as zones of separation are established, and there is confidence that they will hold, operations against FDLR could indeed proceed.

¶7. (SBU) Radio Okapi announced that on October 19, LRA rebels burned and looted the village of Bangadi, 125 kilometers north of Dungu in the Haut Uele District. The LRA then attacked the neighboring villages of Makosa and Ngayime. After the attacks, villagers reportedly ambushed the LRA group, resulting in the deaths of six Congolese and one LRA rebel. According to Radio Okapi, at least 2,100 people have fled their homes for the town of Nyangara.

There are approximately 5,000 IDP's from North Uele scattered throughout Orientale Province.

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